

LATIP 2021**International conference «Language and Technology in an Interdisciplinary Paradigm»****MODERN LITERARY AND ARTISTIC TEXT OF POPULAR
CULTURE: EXPERIENCE IN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of literary and artistic text semantics in the context of its pragmatics and syntactics. The pragmatic component of literary and artistic text of popular culture as a text-building practice within discourse analysis is associated with the text commercial specifics and is aimed at a specific reader. The syntactic specificity of literary and artistic text of popular culture correlates with the previous literary tradition. The study based on the discourse analysis methods shows how the author's system of meanings conditioned by non-textual reality is verbalized and turns into the text, i.e. the field of receptive sensemaking, meanings and meta-meanings that are relevant for a recipient. The study illustrates, by the example of Ulitskaya's novel *Medea and Her Children*, the correlation between a classical narrative and narrative techniques of modern fiction and popular literature, namely, their commonality and differences. It is concluded that classical narrative models used in modern literary and artistic texts of popular culture are changing, precisely, they are emasculated and profaned, which modifies both the model itself and its content potential. Components and symbols of primary cultural communities become a starting point in modeling the literary and artistic text of popular culture. The analysis of the actantial-narrative structure of Ulitskaya's novel *Medea and Her Children* in the context of the myth, literary archetype and gender problems gives grounds for gender differentiation in contemporary poetics, in particular, the ways of organizing literary artistic time and space, and building actantial models.

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1. Introduction

The modern literary and artistic text of popular culture is a phenomenon that deserves the attention of researchers, since it is not only a fact of literature, but also, more broadly, an event of culture and society. This living phenomenon of mass society is constantly being influenced by a reading public and, in its turn, influencing it. Popular culture and its literary components, in particular fiction, are currently coming under the scrutiny of multidiscipline researchers, since nowadays they widely prevail in print runs and influence modern cultural and literary processes. However, literature and culture are in continuous progress, with periods of decline replaced by periods of intensive development and value formation periods – by reevaluation periods. In terms of their artistic and aesthetic merits, many modern literary and artistic texts of popular culture are not inferior to the established canons by a number of criteria. However, unlike high classic literature they can be subjected to critical analysis, becoming objects of literary criticism, since they are not only events of cultural life but also the most interesting and complex elements of literary process.

2. Problem Statement

Besides philological tools of modern fiction studying, the other research means related to cultural studies, and probably, to such cultural orientation disciplines as sociology, social psychology, bibliology, etc. should be used. Within the framework of this analytical approach, a literary scholar is interested in real (not desired) format of the literary process representing a complex synthetic and at the same time dynamic, and dialogical cohesion, with the participants being real (not speculative) communication parties: people who write and people who read (Milovidov, 2007). They are the focus of producing and “consuming” meanings, i.e. cultural objects. A cultural expert has no right to ignore them, if he does not want to distort the real picture of cultural and literary processes in the geographical area that he, as a professional, has chosen for his analysis.

The statement of the problem and a special emphasis on the sociological aspect of the literary process transfers this study from the category of purely literary studies to the category of integrative studies, where literary studies are congruent with cultural studies. We are interested not so much in cultural consequences of the literary texts influence as in these very texts in a cultural context. Therefore, the principles of discourse analysis (critical discourse analysis) included in sociological, cultural, linguistic and literary studies can be the most adequate methodology for studying literary and artistic texts of popular culture (Milovidov, 2016; Tyupa, 2002). Within the framework of this study, its tools allow solving issues related to the text semantics, pragmatics and syntactics, as well as to the tradition and innovation in modern popular literature, in particular fiction. "Discourse analysis of literary and artistic works is the identification of mechanisms for constructing a literary-artistic world, as well as semantic consequences of linguistic mechanisms created by the writer's intention" (Milovidov, 2016, p. 88).

3. Research Questions

Literature always going about its own era “helps a person to make the time of his existence more specific, to distinguish himself from the crowd of his predecessors as well as his like numbers” (Brodsky, 2000, p. 301). Popular literature “steadily preserves the forms of the past and almost always represents a multi-layered structure” (Lotman, 2005, p. 823). Moreover, “from popular literature do we get the simplified and reduced to average norms picture that mirrors the literature age, on the basis of which it is easier to build average models of taste, readers’ ideas and literary norms” (Lotman, 2005, p. 820).

The research subject is a contemporary fiction which artistic and aesthetic specificity can be determined only in relation to the adjacent facts of literature – high classics and popular literature (Krizhovetskaya, 2009). Fiction is “a means to fit into existing cultural stereotypes, to “refresh” and slightly activate them” (Volkova & Milovidov, 2007, p. 82). The perlocutionary effect of a normal intertext is a scandal. The perlocutionary effect of a fictional intertext is comfortable for recipients to recognize the known in the unknown, as this creates a satisfaction with their own competence in the field of cultural phenomena. Characterized by serious literary potential, fictional texts are not so aesthetically significant according to the standards adopted in the high classics aesthetic assessment. It is obvious that fiction is fraught with incompatibility – the conflict of artistic and aesthetic principles.

Contemporary fiction epitomizes the cultural “present” as a commonplace and satisfies the trivial interests of a reader. Moreover, some creative belletrists approve themselves both innovators and skilful writers. This is a so-called “high-quality” fiction, the basis of future high art reflecting the person’s spiritual and emotional baggage, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the world, as well as proclivity for achieving harmonious interactions with it. Fiction is distinguished by sketchiness of main plot moves, stereotyped characters, replication of literary devices, and primitivism of expressive poetic techniques. Nevertheless, stereotypy and schematism harbor the basic characteristics of classical literature usually overlooked by researchers who are attracted primarily by the author's originality in the classics, in each of its pieces.

The ‘technological’ commonality between classics and modern fiction is manifested in the similarity of narrative techniques (narrative models) and linguistic characterology (actantial structures). This is a commonality in the different, and the identification of commonality specifics allows us to analyze objectively the modern fiction that does not come out of a clear blue sky. On the other hand, clarification of the ‘technological’ commonality of fiction and classics makes it possible to judge more impartially the features of the latter. The modern fiction content is a gameplay representation of a variety of actantial-narrative material associated with typical situations of human relationships. The stereotyped technique is a deliberate play with conventional meanings. The human relationships representation problems are modeled by means of a ready-made gameplay, role and situational rules and conflicts. Back in the first half of the last century, the Dutch philosopher and historian Huizinga (1992) noted that “the everyday life of modern society is increasingly determined by the quality that has some common features with a playful one and in which an unusually rich gameplay element of modern culture is hidden” (p. 231). This remark is equally true today – the game content of our age is constantly being replenished with new roles and new rules.

4. Purpose of the Study

Obedying the principle of discourse analysis –“discourse is the speech immersed in life” (Arutyunova, 1990) – the authors of the paper set a goal to analyze the existence of literary and artistic text of popular culture in the context of non-textual reality, i.e. to consider the text semantics in relation to its pragmatics and syntactics. The fiction linguistic sign pragmatics and syntactics define what the literary analysis is made for, i.e. the semantics of the text as implementation of text meaning-generating mechanisms.

The research material is a novel by one of the leading authors of contemporary Russian literature (Medea and Her Children by Ulitskaya), whose works are classified as contemporary fiction.

5. Research Methods

Turning to everyday life, Ulitskaya uses a classic arsenal of narrative techniques and characterology, which are fundamentally inverted. This inversion is a return to the well-known and well-established literary classics models.

“Family thought” is the main theme of women-writers, for:

The world of men and the world of women are different, overlapping in places but not completely. In the female world, issues related to love, family, children assume a greater importance. For a woman, such male problems as struggle for a place in the sun, career and hierarchical challenges are less important. (Ulitskaya, 2000, p. 223)

The family is a dominant primary cultural entity, one of the "topos" of literary-artistic world in the modern epic. Therefore, Ulitskaya makes the family a starting point in her contemporary reality study, but the content of intra-family norms and roles in *Medea and Her Children* changes significantly.

The woman in Ulitskaya's novel, on the one hand, correlates with traditional images of femininity (faithful mate, exemplary mother); on the other hand, the writer destroys myths about the femininity / masculinity created by the previous era art. Extreme members associated with traditional ideas about the differences between masculine and feminine (activity / passivity, strength / weakness, intellect / emotions, spirit / body) are reversed. The portrayal of a man made by a woman-writer loses signs of masculinity, while female characters are faced with the need to be strong. The woman becomes a center of the family world and, more broadly, of the world in general. Ulitskaya's prose is woman-centered, and so she inverts the entire family structure associated with a topological basis of modern prose, namely its narrative-actantial model.

The "Masculinization" of female myth in the novel is based on inversion of one of the famous female mythologemas. The indication of myth as a precedent text is already contained in the book title, with the author rejecting the traditional methods of female myth development and objecting to its canon.

The semantic kernel of the Medea myth is motherhood (albeit tragically broken), but myth semantics is inverted by Ulitskaya. Medea cannot have children and she cannot kill them. A heroine figure referring a reader to ancient mythology and evoking an association with the classic story of

infanticide comes into conflict with the semantic structure of conventional mythologema and desemantizes it, that is why mythologism in the novel becomes not a meaningful but a formal component (the tool to structure a narrative). Based upon the ancient mythological system, “common mythological places” (Meletinsky, 2019, p. 24), Ulitskaya destroys its figurative and symbolic structure and creates a new myth and a new reality.

The figure of Medea Sinopli traces back to the Corinthian epic heroine, but Medea penned by Ulitskaya is devoid of the most important features of an ancient maenad. The plot of the ancient myth is a family death story. Love, conquering reason (ancient Medea is more a mistress than a mother) awakens a destructive force in the Corinthian myth heroine. In Ulitskaya's novel, the antique plot is reinterpreted.

Medea Mendos does not have her own children, but she is a family hearth keeper uniting around her the children and grandchildren of her relatives. This is how the archaic image of the ancestral memory guardian comes to life (the family archive is kept in her house; she puts a big cross on her parents' resting place, looks after her husband's grave). Moreover, making herself into a nucleus around which a large family clusters Medea takes on the functions of a patriarch (male functions) thereby modifying the gender characteristics of the precedent mythologema. The heroine's whole life revolves around her home and her large multinational family – the basic constituents of objective reality. Such a being is a symbolic model of the woman's world reconstructed by the author. Being a childless woman, a righteous woman and a healer, Medea gathers and her large mixed race family in her house, stabilizing relations in it. Such a kind attitude towards each of her loved ones underlies the idea of the conflict-free rapprochement between different cultures, religions and nationalities, the possibility of some Golden Age reconstruction, the worldwide human brotherhood. "The Sinopli family was represented by all its branches – Tashkent, Tbilisi, Vilnius, Siberia ..." (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 248). Their common blood and shared historical roots provide the family syncretism: Medea's family tree is traced to the fifth generation. Medea's house acquires the symbolic meanings: center of the world, universe of a large family, temple, and sacred land. The theme of ritual return home, to the sacred land is associated with the theme of Medea's relatives going to the South, to the seaside, which symbolizes a certain need for ritual communion and renewal. Commitment to the origins is a guarantee of the universal moral law preservation, the main and voluntary guardian of which is Medea, and after her death nephew George, who like no one else is committed to “family mythology”, takes over from her as a spiritual heir. A wanderer, geologist by profession, he traveled many lands and found as a home the one he had always longed for. “Only here I feel homey – he seemed to complain” (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 22). “He was admiring the land, its weathered mountains and smoothed foothills – it was Scythian, Greek, Tatar” (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 16). “...the profiles of mountains kept the appearance of this land, and George loved them, as one can love the face of a mother or the body of a wife, by heart, with his eyes closed, forever” (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 18).

The plot of the novel is a story about the fate of the large family of Medea Mendos, née Sinopli, whose ancestors landed up in the Crimea, having arrived from Greece. "Family Chronicle" turns into "family mythology" (the definition given repeatedly in the text produces by the will of the author a certain code of reader's perception). There is a mythological covert sense in the Sinopli family history: Medea's mother Matilda came from Batum to marry a Greek Georgy Sinopli (the myth heroine came from another country to become Jason's wife).

Ulitskaya's heroine personifies the features of the proud and rebellious beauty of a local landscape, with the ancient divine beauty emerging in her: classic hard features of face, copper hair, proud bearing, etc. In honor of Medea, who has worked in the local hospital for all her life, fellow villagers name the rocks at the head of the bay (another attribute of the mythological code: in ancient times, the area and landforms were named after mythological characters associated with them by fate).

Medea's social role – a medical worker – is mentioned as an additional touch to her psychological and moral portrait. The heroine is at the origins of life by helping her patients and relatives in childbirth, and at the end-of-life trying to facilitate a person's last journey. Like her precursor (ancient Medea drained old blood from Jason's father and poured in a life-giving brew to restore his youth, that is, life), she is rather performs a ceremony than conducts medical procedures. Scouring Samuel's surgery wounds with herb water, "she knew what she was doing: the herbs washed the disease poison out of him." <...> "It was still life, and Medea was ready to carry her burden endlessly..." (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 154). According to Ulitskaya, Medea like an ancient myth heroine is endowed with the gift of omniscience. The secrets of the world are open to her, "the whole neighborhood, near and far, is known to her like the contents of her own kitchen cupboard" (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 6).

The main function of Ulitskaya's (2003) heroine in the mythological system of her novel is a desire to "bring everything to order, to a system, from tea cups on the table to clouds in the sky" (p. 8). In Greek mythology, the transformation of chaos into space (in a mythological world model, space is a universe opposite to chaos) stems from the gods' activities, in Ulitskaya's "family mythology" a creative and transformative principle is embodied in the main female character.

The monumentality of her character brings Medea closer to myth characters, to ancient gods. Characterology of this kind is directly related to myth chronotopic characteristics. Medea just like God is endowed with perfection, completeness, static (alien to the dynamics) youth or maturity, and therefore such an understanding of "perfection and permanence of divine images corresponds to the idea of cyclical nature of being in general and processes of divine intervention in the world history" (Bogatyrev, 2001, p. 170). The time of myth is cyclical, exactly like the time of novel "Medea and Her Children".

The reader's reflection is directed to a single topos, a common point of convergence of all meanings and a human life is interpreted as a moment in the cyclical change of being.

Ulitskaya rejects the historical determinism of her figures and turns to the universal human psychology in the context of family challenges. Mythological, cyclical time displaces linear, objective historical time.

Not only Medea's appearance is mythological but her thinking. It is manifested in the ritual nature of traditions in her house (unspoken prohibition to go to the well after sunset, custom of feeding children and adults at different tables), in her proximity to the earth and the cyclical rhythm of her life associated with nature cycles (summer influx of numerous relatives and loneliness in winter). Mythologism as a worldview and world perception is implemented in the novel poetics as an artistic device and a means of plotting. Cyclicity and repetitiveness manifested in the fates of Ulitskaya's heroes are principles guiding her novel narrative.

One of Ulitskaya's narration features is a ring principle (transmission of main family traits from generation to generation, repetition of main life vectors of heroes). In the history of Medea's family,

cyclicity that regulates the life of heroes is a symbol of renewal, continuity and family memory; it is also an architectonic framework of neomyth that affirms the inviolability of family values. The novel cyclic chronotope finds expression in a backward movement detailing the protagonist' childhood, her ancestors, and the life she lived. The author emphasizes observation skills of the heroine, it seems as if the time was slowing down, a reader gets a sense of eternity of what is happening. The retardation complements the image of the world, makes it spatially integral, the weakened plot enlarges the details.

Realizing the principle of indivisibility of signifier and signified that are characteristic of myth, the writer introduces a ring motif into the text – the symbol of connection with someone / something, the badge of fidelity. In the novel, eternal triangles “connected by a ring” are repeated in two generations: two sisters and a sweetheart (Medea / Sandra – Samuel; Masha / Nika – Butonov). During her love meetings with Samuel, Sandra loses just the ring that Medea will find in a bay; the moment of finding the ring is connected with coming of the hero-lover, who became the cause of Masha's death. The ring connects Medea with the mysterious beginning of the world. “As a little girl she found... a “witch's ring” of nineteen smallish completely identical in size mushrooms with pale green caps <...> The crown of her finds <...> was a flat gold ring with a dull aquamarine thrown to her feet by the sea calming down after a storm...on the day of her sixteenth birthday.” (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 7) Time stops in the “ring” space; movement in a circle is not movement in time; it is the movement in space, i.e. its concentration due to the time component reduction in chronotope.

The literary space of Ulitskaya's novel is characterized by compaction, concentration conditioned by life affinity for a confined world not essentially connected with the other one. At the level of a narrative structure, this concentration of space is predetermined by the reduction of chronotope chronology, its cyclical nature. It is conceivable that this is also one of the characteristics of the female world as a gender-colored version of the literary-artistic concept of being. Ulitskaya constructs a non-spatial plot around Medea: the place is anywhere; the time is anywhen. Consolidation and concentration of space and, as a consequence, slowing down and disappearance of time become a structure-forming basis of the novel. “The complete dissipation of everything in all things cancels out the usual categories of time and space (which are precisely the categories), replacing the ideas about the past, future and present, near, and far by concepts *anywhen* and *anywhere*” (Milovidov, 1996, p, 47). That is the model of chronotope in myth and novel of Ulitskaya.

Faithfully doing her duty to loved ones and understanding it in simple, but at the same time high ethical categories, Medea exists out of their emotional, mental and bodily experiences. Spiritual closeness of Medea and her nephew Georgy emphasizes the masculine character of her image: “both were mobile, swift of foot, appreciated pleasant little things and did not tolerate interference in their inner life” (Ulitskaya, 2003, p. 21). Georgy, the Medea's masculine double, represents life in the same categories of duty and responsibility that are characteristic of the main female character of the novel (see about the motive of gender duality as one of Ulitskaya's artistic devices in Mela, 1998, pp. 101-107).

6. Findings

- The analysis has shown the ways of transforming the narrative models of classics presented in modern fiction. A starting point in literary text modeling has become the components and

symbols of primary cultural communities associated with gender differentiation that is evident in the most significant categories of poetics: spatio-temporal relations and narrative-actantial models.

- Possessing the features and abilities of her predecessor, Medea by Ulitskaya is second to a classic myth heroine in the intensity of passions arousing in and around her. She is not only an anti-Medea, but also a kind of 'smoothed', civilized version of a mythological figure, adapted to the level of modern worldview, behavior norms, etc. Thus, the mythological tradition is 'fictionalized' (if to proceed from the etymology of the word fiction i.e. fine literature; Medea of Greek myth and Medea of Euripides are by no means refined). Ulitskaya destroys the Medea's image and symbolic structure and creates a new myth and a new reality.
- Designed to embody the image of the Great Goddess and being the essence of matriarchal antiquity, the heroine is not a woman in terms of cultural and mythological conceptions. Her feminine virtue seems to be copied from the male model; she is inverted although retains the main structural features of mythologeme.
- Giving a new meaning to the main cultural symbols primarily associated with a woman, the writer creates a new monomyth that in modern literature is a means of "conceptualizing the world, everything that is around and in a person" (Meletinsky, 2019, p. 24).

7. Conclusion

The use of discourse analysis methods allowed us to consider how the author's system of meanings conditioned by non-textual reality is verbalized and turns into the text, i.e. the field of receptive sensemaking, meanings and meta-meanings that become relevant for a recipient.

The pragmatic component of literary and artistic text of popular culture as a text-building practice within discourse analysis correlates with the commercial specifics of the text and is aimed at a specific reader with a certain and often predictable level of aesthetic consciousness.

The syntactic specificity of fictional text correlates with the previous literary tradition, but in a different way than traditional literary studies would have done within the framework of continuity and innovation problems (cultural-historical schools) or within the intertextual analysis (structuralism-oriented literary studies).

Thus, a double textualization level is created in the narrative of literary and artistic texts of popular culture: (i) the story itself as an emerging plot basis, (ii) the interaction of precedent texts in the intertextual space of emerging text.

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